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R 12/

4 January 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Dr. Hornig's Position on the OXCART

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1. asked for my assessment about your views on the OXCART matter. I told him that you were strongly in favor of a continuation of the OXCART through this fiscal year, which, of course, has already been decided. I said that I thought that you also were in favor of whatever extension of the OXCART was necessary to make sure that a replacement of comparable quality was available. If it takes another year to develop the SR-71 to a point where its performance is equal to that of the OXCART, I said that I thought you would be in favor of maintaining the OXCART for another year. I told

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that I thought this was in effect the substance of your statement to Dr. Hornig on the 22nd of December.

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2. then asked me what your position would be on a proposal to extend CIA's franchise to fly the OXCART (or any modification or improvement of the OXCART) indefinitely. I said that I frankly did not know. My impression was that you felt that the most important objective was to maintain your status as a totally objective and disinterested adviser to the White House, the Secretaries of State and Defense, etc. on substantive intelligence matters. I said that I thought you would be most reluctant to impair or jeopardize this status by appearing as the parochial opponent of claims for an Agency franchise which was not really indispensable to the performance of its mission. On the other hand, I said I did not think if it were decided as a result of an impartial review that the Agency should continue to operate manned aircraft, that you would actively oppose such a decision.

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3. then asked me how you would vote if a review developed four or five alternatives, one of which involved continuation by the Agency of an overflight franchise. I said that the only way to find out would be to ask you, which I had never done. I said, however, that,

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I thought how you voted would depend upon a number of factors, including the findings on which the various alternatives were based. 25X1A
agreed that this was logical. He said that what Hornig fears is the possibility of a situation in which he will find himself supporting the idea of a continued franchise in the Agency to fly manned aircraft like the OXCART only to find that the DCI is unwilling or actively opposed to such a solution. I said that I could see his problem.

4. One further impression which I gathered during this conversation is that the Land Panel is no longer a candidate for the job of undertaking an assessment of the various possibilities involving the future of the OXCART. Quite apart from the question of the relative capabilities of the two aircraft, there is the fundamental issue of whether CIA should continue in the manned aircraft business. This involves, of course, many imponderables, with all of which you are thoroughly familiar. Hornig apparently feels that Ed Land does not have the time (or probably the inclination) to get involved in this bouillabaisse. My own view is we should get it solved and in the relatively near future. Otherwise there is considerable danger of our being nibbled to death. As the PFIAB is set up to do this kind of thing, it may be that a panel chaired by somebody like Maxwell Taylor would be the best answer.

JAB
Per. sec. communication
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JOHN A. BROSS
D/DCI/NIPE

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